ST. PETER COMMUNICATOR

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June 2024

From the desk of Pastor Peterson.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, spring has sprung as the saying goes. Gone is the bare soil frozen by the icy grip of winter. The trees are in bloom, the songbirds are back and singing outside my window as I write this. It is nice to see the green grass and the crops coming up from the lawns and fields. The gardens are being put in and the harvest will begin in the fall. When you think about the seasons that we are blessed to be a part of here in Wisconsin and the Midwest in general. The change of seasons is a refreshing and insightful way that which God reminds us that He is in control of all things because He has established a certain order to our world.

In thinking about the change of seasons, we can theologically see the stages, and changes in our own lives. God's Word talks about changes but also gives us the promise that in the midst of change God is with us. In **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 3** For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: ² a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; ³ a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; ⁴ a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; ⁵ a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; ⁷ a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; ⁸ a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. ESV

King Solomon is talking about change, yet he also knew that in spite of changes, God's Word is unchanging. in the Holy Scriptures we can take comfort that even though we go through a time of change, we still have the Word of God. For us as Christians though we have a sure prophetic word. Change is something that we all face each and every day that we live and breathe. Yet the change of seasons and the order in which they run their course also shows us the stability of God's Word. For example, we know that now we are in spring. We know that summer is just around the corner, and summer leads to fall, and fall to winter. Just as Ecclesiastes talks about the change in our lives that we experience. In times of change, it is important to remember that God never changes. His Word is real, His Sacraments are real, and the call to worship is real. When God calls us to His house, it is a reminder that in an everchanging world, God is permanent. In **Psalm 119:89-91**⁸⁹ **Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.** ⁹⁰ **Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you established the earth, and it endures.** ⁹¹ **Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you ESV.** So, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter how much we face the changes in our lives, and in the world, know that God has our backs. Amen

Rev. Wan Plan

Pastor Peterson

©LWML

LUTHERAN WOMEN IN MISSION

Last Call: There is still time to register for the LWML SWD convention! And, we still have room for one more in our hotel room. Think about going with us for a glimpse into the workings of our Women in Mission, and enjoy some time exploring our exhibits, enjoying the mission walk and enriching your knowledge about the missions we sponsor. Dates are Friday afternoon, June 14, through Saturday, June 15. See the bulletin board for information details.

A Place of Refuge: Thanks so much for all the great donations for A Place of Refuge. As I write this we are making plans to deliver these items for the support of the needy/endangered women and babies whom our district assists.

Fellowship Sundays: We're enjoying the opportunity to coordinate the fellowship time after Sunday service on the second Sunday of each month. (We skipped May since it was Mother's Day and we wanted to provide that extra hour for families to get together to honor Mom!) It would be so much more fun if more of our families joined us and we could just chat for a little while. If anyone would like to participate in providing goodies for us to munch on, check out the sign-up sheet on the little desk in the Narthex.

Gifts from the Heart: We don't currently have any opportunities for Gifts for others, but start watching for back to school sales as this will be our focus in August.

Bible studies: Our meetings continue during the summer on the second Tuesday of each month at 1:00. Join us for interesting and thoughtful Bible study and for any business or planning that may be timely.



Prison ministry: Mercy for 'the least of these'

By Cheryl Magness



The Rev. Brian Heller, manager of LCMS Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry, informed conference attendees of the resources the Synod has available to help in their prison ministry efforts. (LCMS/Frank Kohn)

"The inmate that you are visiting is in the jaws of the wolf, but greater is He that is in you."

During his keynote address at the 2024 Prison Ministry Coordinators Conference, held April 15– 16 at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, the Rev. Tim Carter, associate pastor and director of Life Care at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ind., told attendees that they are compelled, by Matthew 25, to do the work they do:

"'For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me'" (Matt. 25:42–45).

But, said Carter, it is "a thousand times more effective" when the one visiting the prisoner "is sent by a congregation with its support and prayers": "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!"(Eccl. 4:9–10).

From the highways and byways

Equipping congregations with the tools necessary for effective prison ministry was the primary focus of the two-day conference, which gathered under the theme, "From the Highways, Byways, Prisons and Jails ... Compel Them to Come In." The theme comes from Luke 14:23: "And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled." The conference was hosted by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) Southern Illinois District (SID) along with co-hosts LCMS Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry, Concordia Publishing House (CPH), the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, Lutheran Braille Workers (LBW), Lutheran Hour Ministries and Lutheran Heritage Foundation.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SID had more than 20 active prison ministries. "We were going in every week without any problem at all," said the Rev. Dr. Jeff Nehrt, pastor of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Greenville, Ill. That number declined precipitously during the pandemic, he said, to no more than eight times in two years.

Nehrt, who also serves as one of three prison ministry coordinators for the SID, spoke to conference attendees about a pilot program the district is testing called "Reaching Out by Reaching In." The program seeks to connect prisoners with volunteers who are willing to correspond with them. "COVID stifled prison ministry. That could happen again," he said. "That's why we're so passionate about getting something in place so that, even if we can't go in … the message of the Gospel can continue to be shared." Nehrt emphasized that the program carefully protects the identities and personal information of the volunteers. Yet in-person visits remain important as well, providing a witness that can extend beyond the individual being visited. "Prison ministry is an expression of pure mercy," Nehrt said. "You do it because God sends you, because Jesus say so."

"We may not ever see the 'reward' of the work," he continued. "But we want those who serve in prison ministry, each time we go into an institution, to share the message that Jesus Christ died for that person's sins and has given him or her the promise of eternal life through Christ's sacrifice at Calvary. That message is for all — not only for the incarcerated but for their families, the guards, prison staff, volunteers and anyone else we may encounter."

'How can we ever say no?'

The Rev. Brian Heller, manager of Specialized Spiritual Care Ministry, including prison ministry, for the LCMS Office of National Mission, brought greetings from the Synod, updated conference participants on resources currently available from National Mission and asked what else the Synod can do to support prison ministry. Heller shared that the Synod receives several letters each month from inmates looking for support and resources. "They have often heard about the LCMS from other inmates. One of the things we want to do is not just give them a Bible and walk away ... but connect them with a local LCMS pastor and congregation that will provide ongoing support."

Heller said that he would be sharing details later in the morning about a new Prison Ministry Kit, developed by CPH in partnership with the LCMS, that includes an abridged *Lutheran Service Book*, an ESV Bible in easy-to-read 8-point font, and Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (1991 ed.). Each conference attendee received a free sample of the kit, which is not available on the CPH website but can be obtained by contacting Specialized Spiritual Care at specializedcare@lcms.org.

Other speakers at the conference included Ann Vasquez, CEO of Lutheran Foundation of St. Louis, which issues grants for the 12-county greater St. Louis area; Vanessa Johnson, executive director of LWML, who reviewed a variety of ways the organization supports prison ministry; the Rev. Jon Hohgrefe, who shared wisdom and strategies gained from serving in SID prison ministry; and David Jenkins, CEO of LBW, which provides Braille and large-print Bibles and other resources to the visually impaired at no cost. Jenkins noted that visual impairment is the #1 physical disability reported by federal prisoners, comprising 12% of the federal prison population. Since its beginning in 1943, LBW has produced and distributed over 15 million volumes of Christian material, in 40 languages, to people in 164 countries. No recipient of LBW materials has ever been charged. "If people are asking for the Gospel," Jenkins said, "how can we ever say no?"

Satan's 'trophy case'

During his keynote, Carter shared that before he was an LCMS pastor, he spent 20 years serving in various roles in the execution unit of the Texas

June

State Penitentiary in Huntsville, Texas. Over the course of that time, he participated in the capital punishment of 168 inmates. He wrote about his experience working on death row in his book, *The Executioner's Redemption: My Story of Violence, Death, and Saving Grace* (CPH, 2016).

In the book's introduction, Carter writes that it is "not a treatise for or against capital punishment" but "the story of the progression of my faith in Christ — a relationship that triggered a long and serious struggle to know His will concerning my authority and Happy Bírthday

- 1 Pastor Krueger
- 4 Sandra Mirsberger
- 6 Laurie Ecker
- 9 Alec Schwalenberg
- 12 Delaina Mueller Louis Hernke
- 14 Barb Konen
- 15 David Behnke
- 16 DeAnn Eldred Madalyn DuPrey Jordan Kalies
- 17 Dolores Bornemann Marjy Jentsch
- **19** Paul Schwalenberg
- 24 Dave Franz
- **25** Bonnie Ott
- 28 Jan Bergelin

responsibility in wielding that sword" (viii). It was a progression that ultimately led Carter to attend seminary and become a pastor. Now when he enters the prison door, it is not to carry out executions but to bring the Gospel to the condemned.

He acknowledged, in his keynote, the difficulty not only of gaining access to prisoners but of getting beyond the obstacles that present themselves even after access is gained. "I know this firsthand," he said, "because I was an enemy of prison ministry. We not only hated the inmates; we hated you [the prison ministry workers]. Every one of you is a security risk, a problem waiting to happen, a weak link in the chain of control ... a 'hug-a-thug.""

He now puts himself in the category of "hug-a-thug."

"Prison is Satan's trophy case," Carter said, "composed of lives that he has managed to totally destroy. ... Satan visits them every day. You or their family member only occasionally gets in there.

"But the reason we're all here today is that you are so powerfully effective. Your visit or card or letter is beyond priceless. No matter how often Satan visits that inmate, one short visit with God's Word is enough to overcome all of Satan's visits."

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod LCMS Stewardship Ministry Newsletter Article – June 2024

The Gift of Contentment

As children grow up, they often feel cramped by their parents' restrictions. Dad says to be home by 11. But why can't I say out 'til midnight? Mom says to clean your room on Saturday morning. But I want to sleep in late, then roll out of bed, hop in the car and go to my friend's house without delay. I want to do what I decide is best. The older we get, and especially when we have kids of our own, we begin to see the truth. Mom and Dad were not cramping our style or trying to crush our personal freedom — they were looking out for us, providing for us and teaching us a better way of life.

If that's how it is with fallible human parents, how much more so with our Heavenly Father! We sinners often feel cramped by the Law of God. Our sinful flesh wants to go its own way, do its own thing and be in charge. But in our heart of hearts, we know how foolish this is. We know that God loves us, and therefore all of His commands are for our benefit. Each one of His commandments is meant to bless us. Consider the last two commandments:

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or get it in a way which only appears right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it. (SC II)

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty. (SC II)

The commandments against coveting are warning us against losing one of the greatest gifts we can possess: contentment. Being content and thankful with what God has provided for us is a necessary building block of living a happy life. Unthankful coveting of what we have not been given will only make us miserable, so God warns us against it.

God has proven His love for us in sending His only begotten Son to shed His blood for us, cleanse us of our sins and brings us back into His family. If He loves us this much, then when percentage of His commandments do you think are meant to harm us? Probably no more than one or two percent, right? Of course that's absurd. God means to bless us with everything He says to us. The Law of God simply describes what a truly happy life, lived in thankfulness to Christ, looks like: It's a generous, merciful, contented life that uses all of the resources God has given us for His purposes.

LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship

THE LUTHERAN WITNESS



Collects: A Simple Way to Pray in Every Situation

By Jennifer Jordan

Did you notice the "lowly" collect last Sunday?

In the Divine Service, the collect (pronounced COL-lect) is the short prayer just before the Old Testament reading. It echoes the theme of the day's appointed readings and "collects" the prayers of the people into one, unified request prayed by the pastor on behalf of the congregation.

This short, ancient form of prayer (sometimes also known as the "Prayer of the Day") shows us that our fears and faults today are the same as those faced by all Christians in every time and place. We are not alone in our weariness, fears, sin or our need for forgiveness. We therefore pray the collect as a *collective*, corporate prayer.

An Education in How to Pray

A collect has five parts. Turn to the Collect for Peace (*LSB*, p. 251) to see them:

An address: O God,

An acknowledgment of who God is and what He has done: From whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works,

A petition: *Give to us, Your servants, that peace which the world cannot give,*

A plea: That our hearts ... being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness,

A trinitarian conclusion praising God's eternal reign: Through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

There are early versions of this type of prayer in I and II Maccabees in the Apocrypha, but the collect as we know it today dates back to at least the fifth century. Thomas Cranmer, the first Anglican archbishop of Canterbury, included English translations of many of these earliest collects when he composed the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549.

Finding Comfort in the Collect

Lutheran Service Book contains many of these early collects as well as newer ones. Our collection of collects spans the history of Christianity. Turn to Page 305 in *LSB* to use them in your own devotions.

Like the Reformation Christians of Cranmer's time, we regularly need God's help to "read, mark, and inwardly digest" the Word (as we pray in the collect for the Second Sunday of Advent). We also sometimes despair of God's love and need the reassurance found in the collect for Ash Wednesday: "God hates nothing that He has made."

When you're faced with a concern that bears repeated prayer, you may find comfort in writing your own collect — for instance, a collect for a damaged friendship:

1. Begin with the address: O God,

2. Then remind God of His gift of friendship as described in the Bible: Who gave Jonathan as a friend to Your servant David and instituted friendship as a comfort in life...

3. Next, ask God for what you desire: Forgive us where our sin has hurt others, and grant us grace to forgive friends who have hurt us.

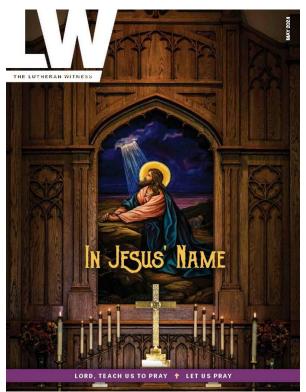
4. Now, state the God-pleasing outcome you hope will come to pass: That we may work together in Your church in peace, serving our neighbors as You have commanded.

5. Close in the name of Jesus: This we ask in the name of Jesus, Your only Son, who reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Because collects are corporate prayer, a collect always uses "we," just like the Lord's Prayer, never "me." You're likely not the only one experiencing this need — others surely are as well.

This simple prayer takes our own needs and pain and unites them with the prayers of everyone in the Body of Christ. We are not alone. That's something beautiful to think about.

Article from May 2024 Issue of The Lutheran Witness



Letter From the President



The Diptych: A Guide for Prayer

By Matthew C. Harrison

Years ago, I noted in the writings and correspondence of the famous Lutheran Hermann Sasse (1895–1976) the recurrent mention of the word "diptych" (pronounced DIP-tich) when he wrote about his prayer life. For instance, in a letter to Bavarian Lutheran Bishop Hermann Dietzfelbinger, Sasse concluded a letter: "Well, this letter is already too long. Besides that, I'm suffering my mid-afternoon fever, and I must stop work. Your diptychs are surely long, but if there is still room, please don't exclude my name."

He used the word "diptych" more figuratively in 1967, when he wrote to J.A.O. Preus after receiving an honorary doctorate from Concordia Theological Seminary, then in Springfield:

The doctorate I have received from you I regard as a high responsibility. I shall always be one of you, so may God me help, joined with you in the same obligation to teach the Word of God, to be faithful to the doctrine of the Church as confessed in the Book of Concord. Whether we shall meet on this earth again, God alone knows. But Concordia Springfield is firmly written on the diptychs of my heart.

Sasse also wrote to a friend in 1960: "Please be not angry with me. I am almost drowning in work. But I have been thinking much of you. You are on my diptychs."

From these and many other diptych references by Sasse, I realized that he kept a list of people for whom he prayed daily, and he never failed to ask his friends and correspondents to add him to their prayer list.

Diptych comes from the Greek, "to fold

twice." In the ancient world, it meant two tablets joined so they fold together. The tablets were covered lightly with wax, and a stylus was used to write on them. Archaeologists have discovered many such tablets used in the ancient Roman world, some even with writing on the wax still legible. The church began to use these tablets at the Divine Service for "the prayers."

I write "the prayers," based on Acts 2:42. "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." "The fellowship" likely refers to the gathering and sharing of food for the needy among the believers (Acts 6), though the word (koinonia) is certainly also used in the New Testament for the common unity brought about by Christ who is present in Word and Sacrament (1 Cor. 10:16–17; 1 John 1). "The breaking of bread" is certainly the Lord's Supper. And "the prayers" were a regular set practice during church. Paul's list of people at the end of Romans, for instance, may well be from lists he kept of people for whom he prayed daily (so Sasse believed). The Pauline encouragement to greet so and so with a "holy kiss," (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26) indicates how closely the proto[1]diptych was tied to church and altar fellowship.

The diptychs came to include prayers for those in various needs and for governing officials. First Timothy 2:1–8 seems to place these prayers in the Divine Service. In A.D. 60 when Paul wrote Timothy, it was clear that Emperor Nero wasn't exactly a paragon of virtue. How ironic that the very guy for whom all Christians prayed during their assemblies would martyr Peter and Paul just a few years later. "Pray for those who persecute you," Jesus commanded, and so they did.

Over time, other additions to the diptych were made. Bishops and pastors with whom the church was in fellowship were listed in the diptych, and so such prayers were a vital way to publicly confess a congregation's orthodoxy and church fellowship with other orthodox bishops and people. Just like today, there were many various more or less heretical or schismatic "denominations." Unfortunately, by the time of Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), prayers for the deceased were slipped into the diptych.

Today standard LCMS practice mirrors the ancient church in many ways, though excluding the prayers for the dead. Our congregations' altar prayers should regularly include prayers for neighboring pastors and congregations, for districts and district presidents, and also for yours truly. First Peter 5:8 conjures up visions of Gethsemane, when St. Peter and the others failed to keep watch with Jesus in prayer: "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." I can't tell you how much it means to know that faithful people, whole congregations in fact, are praying for their pastors, their district leaders, even their Synod and its president. In some very tough moments, I have found it humbling beyond belief to know that I am being carried by the prayers of thousands upon thousands.

Just as the congregation used the diptych to pray for public needs of the congregation, individuals began to use these prayer tablets in the home. It's no wonder. Apostolic admonitions to prayer are numerous in the Bible. These are grounded in Christ's own example and admonition. Individually owned diptychs have been unearthed in Rome, one of which bears the owner's name, "Gallienus Concessus."

Shortly after I was elected LCMS president in 2010, I stayed in the Berlin home of the retired Bishop Jobst Schöne of our German sister church, the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (SELK). In his study was a well-worn kneeler, Bible open, pages transparent from handling, next to a candle burnt to a mere pool of wax. I was cut to the heart. I thought: "I need to learn how to pray." When I returned home, I built a prayer kneeler and placed it in my office at the LCMS International Center. And then I began posting lists on the kneeler.

Urged on by Sasse and Schöne, I began making lists. My diptychs are sticky notes. In addition to praying the psalms, the Lord's Prayer and perhaps the Litany (a descendent of the diptychs), I began praying through my sticky note "diptych." Wife, family, parents, children, employees, persons, events, pastors, crises, districts, district presidents, Council of Presidents, institutions, seminaries, presidents, challenges, heartbreaks, suffering and so on.

What's been the result of my diptych? Surprise. Some prayers the Lord answers as He answered St. Paul: "My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). And so I say with Christ, "Lord if thou will, take this cup of suffering from me or so-andso, yet not my will, but Thine be done." But quite frankly, over time I began to notice how God answers prayer. Person after person, situation after situation, crises after crises have more often than not been resolved or otherwise worked for obvious good. I'm quite sure the Lord Christ has always answered my prayer this way. He most often showers us with blessings "even without our prayer." Praying with a diptych has allowed this sinner to clearly see Christ's myriad blessings, "to realize this and to receive his daily bread with thanksgiving."

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. (2 Thess. 3:1–5)

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

June

- 11th Dean & Jan Bergelin
- 16th Charles & Jerilyn Fochs
- 20th Dennis & Melissa DuPrey
- **23**rd Jerry & Nancy Propson
 - David & Lori Schwalenberg

June 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Altar Guild: Dan & Cindy Koffarnus						1
 2 Second Sunday after Pentecost Green 8:30 Divine Service 	3	4 7:00p Bible Study	5	6	7 10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton	8
 9 Third Sunday after Pentecost Green 8:30 Divine Service (NC) Fellowship 	10	11 1:00p WIM Meeting & Bible Study	12	13	14 10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton	15
•		7:00p Bible Study			LWML Convention – Sun Prairie	
16 Fourth Sunday after Pentecost <i>Green</i> 8:30 Divine Service	17	18	19	20 6:00p Elders' Meeting 6:30p Council Meeting	21 10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton	22
Father's Day		7:00p Bible Study		Summer Begins		
23 Fifth Sunday after Pentecost <i>Green</i> 8:30 Divine Service (NC)	24	25	26	27	28 10:00 Bible Study @ Terra Verde, Chilton	29
	VBS – 11 a.m. – 2 p.m				Terra verue, crintori	
30 Sixth Sunday after Pentecost Green 8:30 Divine Service	Newsletter Articles Due	7:00p Bible Study				